

## Cyclosporiasis

### What is cyclosporiasis?

Cyclosporiasis is an infection of the intestine caused by a parasite called *Cyclospora cayetanensis* (SIGH-clo-SPORE-uh KYE-uh-tuh-NEN-sis). The first known human cases of *Cyclospora* infection (cyclosporiasis) were reported in 1979.

### Who gets cyclosporiasis?

People of all ages can get this infection. Although travelers to tropical countries may be at increased risk from exposure to contaminated water or food, the disease also occurs in the United States. The risk may vary with season; cases are reported year-round, but the majority of cases and outbreaks are reported during the spring and summer months. Persons who have previously been infected with *Cyclospora* can become infected again.

### How is cyclosporiasis spread?

The disease can be spread when a form of the *Cyclospora* parasite that can make someone sick enters the body through the mouth. People with cyclosporiasis pass the parasite in their feces (stool), but that form of the parasite cannot make people sick. Therefore, this disease is not spread directly from one person to another. The parasite needs time (days to weeks) in the environment to change to a form that can make people sick. After this time has passed, a person can get sick after putting something (e.g., food, water) that is contaminated with *Cyclospora* into his/her mouth. Outbreaks of cyclosporiasis in the U.S. have been linked to imported fresh produce, such as raspberries, basil, lettuce, and snow peas. The produce involved in each outbreak was probably contaminated in the country where it was grown.

### What are the symptoms of cyclosporiasis?

*Cyclospora* infect the small intestine (bowel) and usually cause watery diarrhea, with frequent, sometimes explosive, bowel movements. Other symptoms can include loss of appetite, weight loss, bloating, increased gas, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, low-grade fever, and fatigue. Some people who are infected with *Cyclospora* do not have any symptoms.

### How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within one week after exposure. If not treated, the illness may last from a few days to a month or longer. Symptoms may seem to go away and then return one or more times (relapse).

### **How is cyclosporiasis diagnosed?**

Diagnosis involves identifying this parasite in stool through special laboratory tests that are done only if specifically requested by your health care provider. Because cyclosporiasis can be difficult to diagnose, you may be asked to submit several stool specimens over several days. Your health care provider may also ask the lab to check your stool for other organisms that can cause similar symptoms.

### **What is the treatment for cyclosporiasis?**

People who have diarrhea should rest and drink plenty of fluids. Specific antibiotics are sometimes prescribed. Options for treatment should be discussed with your healthcare provider.

### **How can cyclosporiasis be prevented?**

Farmers should follow good practices for growing, harvesting, and packing fresh fruits and vegetables. Fresh produce should always be washed. Travelers, especially to tropical areas, should avoid eating raw or undercooked foods or drinking untreated water that could be contaminated with feces. Proper sanitation to prevent human waste from contaminating the environment is important.

### **How can I get more information about cyclosporiasis?**

- 1) If you have concerns about disease, contact your healthcare provider.
- 2) Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/index.htm>.
- 3) Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/>.